



North American Wetlands Conservation Council Meeting March 14, 2001

Project Recommendations

The Council approved 34 Small Grants with a total request of \$1,525,600. The Council recommends the following items for approval by the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission at its June 2001 meeting:

Canada: Sixteen proposals requesting a total of \$16,975,066.

Mexico: Eight proposals requesting a total of \$1,197,971.

United States Small Grants: For FY 2001, 11 additional small grants requesting a total of \$509,900. For FY 2002, a Small Grants Program that is funded at 5 percent of the U.S. allocation, with a minimum of \$1 million and a maximum of \$2 million.

Statement of Program Direction

The Council is very supportive of all-bird, all-bird habitat conservation. The primary challenge is to find additional funding to accomplish comprehensive bird habitat conservation. Council has committed, working through individual members, to seek additional funding for migratory bird conservation to address all birds in all habitats, and if sources can be secured, the Council would be pleased to act in the capacity of administering these funds.

The Council affirms its commitment under North American Wetlands Conservation Act (Act) to continue maintaining its primary focus on wetland ecosystems and wetland associated migratory bird resources. Council fully recognizes the continuing unmet habitat conservation needs of wetlands associated birds and acknowledges the tremendous success of partnerships and projects under the Act.

Council recognizes that the Act is a primary tool for conservation delivery of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP). Other programs such as Wetlands Reserve Program, Conservation Reserve Program, and Coastal Grants programs are also absolutely critical to attaining the objectives of the Plan. Council recognizes that the goals and habitat conservation objectives of the Plan have not been fully achieved and therefore reaffirms its commitment to give appropriate priority to maintaining and encouraging broadening of this highly successful partnership effort. Likewise, other bird initiatives have unmet habitat needs and will need to employ a diverse array of tools to address conservation priorities of these initiatives, and the Act can only be viewed as one of the conservation tools for any bird conservation plan.

Council reaffirms its intent that wetlands conservation projects provide conservation benefits to all wetland associated migratory birds, as well as other fish and wildlife that depend on these habitats.

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Program Adjustments

The Council recognizes the concerns expressed for inequities dealing with taxonomic groups as brought forth by the bird initiatives report dated December 14, 2000. To address these concerns the following program changes will be made:

1. The changes incorporated in January 2001 address some of those concerns by providing the potential for any bird group to receive 15 points and better accommodate projects designed for habitat specialists.
2. Consistent with the purpose of the Act, the Council intends to broaden the content of Technical Assessment Question 3 to include the geographical priorities of all of the major migratory bird plans (NAWMP, U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan, Partners in Flight, North American Waterbird Plan). Council directs its staff to consult with representatives of the bird initiatives and other interested parties and present a proposal to incorporate their geographic priorities to Council for consideration in July 2001. The goal is for implementation in FY 2003.
3. Further, as a stated goal, the Council will give priority to projects that demonstrate contributions to the priorities of the major international and national migratory bird conservation plans. The Council directs staff to highlight projects that, taken as a whole slate, will provide major contributions to bird conservation across all wetland-associated taxonomic groups.

Staff Direction: Staff should present an alternative slate to Council in July using this information.

Programmatic Evaluation

A contractor is evaluating the first 10 years of the Act's grant programs. The review covers all aspects of the program, except Mexico. This evaluation will find new ways to demonstrate achievements and help meet the Council's goals. A number of Act partners will be asked to participate in surveys or focus groups. If you are asked, we hope you will take the time to contribute. Results will be available in Spring 2002.

Upland Bird Habitat Proposals Evaluation Framework

Council directed staff to work with partners (in particular, Partners in Flight) to continue developing a framework for upland bird habitat project evaluation in anticipation of the emergence of additional funding source(s) for upland work. A recommendation is to be presented to Council for consideration in July 2001.